THE YOUNG WIDOW; OR, THE HISTORY OF Mrs. LEDWICH.

VOL. II.

THE YOUNG WIDOW; OR, THE HISTORY OF Mrs. LEDWICH.

WRITTEN BY HERSELF.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS TO JAMES LEWIS, Esq.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE

YOUNG WIDOW;

OR, THE

HISTORY of Mrs. LEDWICH.

LETTER XI.

To James Lewis, Esq;

Sir,

ONE day that Miss Melville came to see me, rather earlier than usual, I was but just up, and in my dressing-room. I desired her to banish all ceremony, and stay with me till I was fit to make my appearance below stairs.

A picture which I had of Mrs. Molesworth lay on the table; she took it up, examined it attentively, and enquired with

with a faltering voice, the name of the Lady whoſe reſemblance ſhe had in her hand? When I had informed her, tears ſtreamed from her eyes, and her whole form wore the appearance of the moſt agonizing diſquietude. I was loſt in aſtoniſhment, and entreated her to be compoſed.

"Perhaps," ſaid ſhe, "you are intimately acquainted with her, and are not ignorant of her melancholy ſtory."

I anſwered, that for ſome time before her death, I had enjoyed the pleaſure of her friendſhip. "That accident, Miſs Melville," continued I, "brought you and I acquainted; and the happineſs I had experienced in the affection of that deceaſed dear woman, Mrs. Moleſworth, had occaſioned me to be ſo ſolicitouſly importunate to obtain your confidence. Perhaps," added I, "*you* alſo was attached to her; and, if ſo, you knew a woman whoſe virtues could only be equalled by her misfortunes."

"I did indeed know her," ſaid Miſs Melville, in the moſt mournful tone of voice, and a countenance expreſſive of the

the moſt exquiſite ſadneſs, " but I was ignorant of her death. Can you tell me," continued ſhe, with ſome eagerneſs, " to what it was attributed ?"

I replied, that grief had impaired her conſtitution, and was evidently the occaſion of her deceaſe.

" Gracious Heaven !" cried Miſs Melville, " look down with mercy on me, and either ſtrengthen me to ſupport what I endure, or free me from the recollection of my ſufferings."—She took my hand, and preſſed it to her lips.—" You " have often," ſhe ſaid, " been ſolicitous to learn the occaſion of my melancholy ; and, I doubt not, attributed my ſilence to a diſregard of your kindneſs. Believe me that was not the caſe, and nothing but the certainty of rendering myſelf odious to you would have made me perſevere in the concealment of my miſery. You have told me, that Mrs. Moleſworth was your friend : the knowledge of my ſtory will now make me doubly deteſtable ; but I have ſinned, nor can any puniſhment be too ſevere. Know then that my real name is Johnſon, and that Melville is only an aſſumed one."

I ſtarted

I ſtarted with a ſurpriſe, not entirely free from horror, but recollection brought me to myſelf, and I entreated her to be compoſed. I told her, that I had indeed been informed of her misfortunes, but could never believe, where ſo unfeigned a repentance was the conſequence of guilt, that ſhe was eaſily ſeduced into it, or that her deviation from virtue had been ever unattended with miſery.

"You are too kind," ſaid Miſs Johnſon, "in your opinion of me, though it is no more than I expected from the generoſity and humanity of your diſpoſition. I have not any thing to alledge which can even palliate my crime.

"I was engaged to a Mr. Menel, who, though in every reſpect inferior to Mr. Moleſworth, was yet amiable and deſerving. Louiſa I called my friend, and as ſuch ſhe ever behaved to me. Ah! what a return did I make to her affection! Menel loved me, and I requited it by involving him in guilt, and ſtaining his ſoul with murder. The unhappy partner of my crime was hurried from the world without even time for repentance. On every

every one that loved me I have brought ruin and deſtruction; I have broke through the moſt ſacred engagements, yet I ſtill live; though Heaven knows how ardently I wiſh to be freed from my exiſtence.

" Mrs. Moleſworth, you ſay, informed you of her melancholy ſtory; and as I was the occaſion of her miſery, ſhe doubtleſs mentioned me to you. Of my guilt ſhe had but too convincing proofs, but ſhe was ignorant of my repentance, and the torments of my mind, at the time I appeared moſt happy. If it is not preſuming on your kindneſs, and will not be tireſome to you, ſuffer me to inform you of what is known only to myſelf.

" I had long been acquainted with Louiſa, and on her marriage ſhe unfortunately introduced me to her huſband, and perſuaded me to conſider her houſe as my own. I beheld Mr. Moleſworth with that cold indifferent approbation which his engagements made natural. I acknowledged him to be handſome, elegant, and accompliſhed; but it was an admiration, which was neither criminal in itſelf, or deſtructive to my peace.

" Unfor-

"Unfortunately he ſoon became enamoured of me, and his being frequently with me, gave him but too many opportunities of diſplaying his powers of pleaſing. Thoſe attractions which I beheld without emotion, whilſt I was myſelf an object of indifference, acquired additional graces when I perceived I was beloved.

"Dangerouſly and deſtructively inſinuating as Mr. Moleſworth was, I did not receive the firſt declaration of his paſſion without horror and amazement. He uſed ten thouſand arts to appeaſe my anger, and, alas! was too ſucceſsful. He however promiſed me to be for ever ſilent on the ſubject for the future, and for ſome time adhered to his promiſe: but a woman who twice puts it in the power of a man to affront her with the repetition of a paſſion which is criminal, however ſhe may boaſt of her modeſty and virtue, has, I fear, but little pretenſion to either. It was not by anger or reſentment that I ought to have expreſſed my deteſtation of his conduct, but by eternally avoiding him. I once had thoughts of doing

doing ſo, but knew no plauſible reaſon to aſſign to Louiſa for leaving her houſe. I could not bring myſelf to acquaint her with the behaviour of her huſband, and reſolved in my own mind to treat Mr. Moleſworth with the utmoſt indifference; that if my conduct had encouraged ſentiments ſo injurious to me, if poſſible, to deſtroy them: but, alas! this reſolution was but of ſhort continuance.

"I never imagined that I loved him, till I ſaw him, to a very handſome young lady of my acquaintance, pay particular attention. I felt the greateſt uneaſineſs; he perceived the advantage which jealouſy had given him over me, and renewed his former tenderneſs to me. Convinced that I loved him, I ought, eternally, to have avoided him, but I had not the power. Whenever he mentioned his affection, I was fearful of entirely repulſing him, leſt he ſhould carry to another that paſſion which I rejected, and which I fooliſhly imagined, any one would joyfully accept. He kept alive my fears to deaden the ſuggeſtions of conſcience; and, in ſhort, friendſhip, honour, and the

the ſolemn engagement I had contracted with Mr. Menel, gave way to a paſſion which, circumſtanced as I was, could not be exceeded in guilt. I acknowledged I loved him.—But not to tire you with a ſtory, the event of which you are already acquainted with, every thing was baniſhed from my remembrance but him; nor was any thing refuſed, which he judged neceſſary for his happineſs.

" Mrs. Moleſworth, I ſuppoſe, informed you of the circumſtances of his diſſolution, and of the promiſe ſhe had made him; but I never ſaw her after the day of his death. I could not bear the ſight of her; and being aſſured that we ſhould only aggravate each other's diſtreſs, I wrote to the injured woman, left her friendly roof, and went into the country, where I took lodgings at a farm-houſe.

" The horrors of my mind, on the reflection of my guilt, are inconceivable. I cannot deſcribe them; nor, to this day, have I overcome them. I am, indeed, free from thoſe violent agitations which

which were almoſt deſtructive to my reaſon, but in their place is a fixed deſpair, and ſettled melancholy. A meeting which I had with Mr. Menel, made me reſolve to leave the place I had retired to, and Mrs. Beaumont's entreaties for me to live with her, induced me once more to return to London.

"True repentance ſprings from the heart, and is not to be called off by adventitious objects, however alluring they may be. In the moſt gay and crowded ſcenes, I carry with me the ſame remorſe and ſorrow as in the more retired ones. The allurements of the world attract not the mind whoſe peace is deſtroyed; and reflection but aggravates the evil. My own thoughts are the cauſe of my diſtreſs, and they accompany me every where. The only gleam of comfort I enjoyed was the eſteem and regard you entertained for me, and I am, with juſtice, deprived of that."

Whatever my own ſentiments might be on that ſubject, I aſſured Miſs Johnſon to the contrary. I felt a commiſeration

tion for her diſtreſs, though I was conſcious it was her own guilt which had brought it on her; but I was alſo ſenſible, that I ought to be the laſt perſon in the world who ſhould dare to be ſevere in the condemnation of another.

I told her, that I underſtood Mr. Menel had retired to a place of ſecrecy, after his unfortunate encounter with Mr. Moleſworth. She replied, that he did ſo, and to the very place which ſhe had choſen for her own retreat.

"It was there," added ſhe, "that I ſaw him. As the perturbation of my mind deprived me of reſt, I generally roſe by break of day, and uſed to walk in a wood at a little diſtance from the houſe.

"One morning I was ſurprized with the ſight of a man, with whoſe countenance I was too well acquainted. The recollection of his injuries, and my own offences towards him, made me utter an involuntary ſcream. He ſtarted, and caught me in his arms. His eyes were ſunk;

ſunk; his countenance pale and wan; the tears ſtreamed down his cheeks whilſt he preſſed me to his heart. He did not utter one reproach for the ruin and miſery I had occaſioned him: on the contrary, when I accuſed myſelf, in the bittereſt terms, for my conduct, he ſought to excuſe me to myſelf, and ſeemed to have forgot his own ſorrows, in the endeavour to ſooth mine. He urged his affection in the tendereſt terms, and told me, if I would conſent to be his wife, that he would leave no art untried to make me happy, and that every thing that was paſt ſhould be buried in eternal oblivion.

"I conſidered this offer, as proceeding more from paſſion than love. Love, I knew, by experience, required more the poſſeſſion of the heart, than the perſon, and that mine never could be his, Mr. Menel had every reaſon to imagine.

"I thanked him for his generoſity, but told him, what he propoſed was impoſſible; that he muſt be convinced, marriage

marriage would be a ſtate of torment, where, on one ſide, there could be neither confidence, or eſteem; and on the other, the conſciouſneſs of having committed an injury, he would impute to unkindneſs, the moſt trivial neglect; and that even a ſerious look would be conſtrued by him into reproach, or repentance for ſo indiſcreet an union.

"You never will be mine then, ſaid Mr. Menel, in an accent of madneſs?

"I never can be, anſwered I.

"Oh! by Heavens, ſaid he, (catching me in his arms with the wildeſt look which you can poſſibly conceive) you ſhall, you muſt be mine.

"I ſtruggled to diſengage myſelf.

"It is in vain, ſaid he; you yielded to Moleſworth's pretended love, what you perſiſt in denying to the moſt ardent and ſincere of paſſions. I never infringed the moſt rigid bounds of delicacy, whilſt I flattered myſelf with obtaining you

you for a wife; and even now, would die ſooner than offend you, if I had any hopes of your conſenting: but I cannot live without you, and am reſolved to ſeize by force, what would be willingly yielded, could I aſſume the form of Moleſworth.

"I burſt into tears, and exclaimed, gracious Heaven! how am I fallen! Your want of reſpect I have no right to accuſe, my conduct juſtifies your inſolence; but your want of delicacy and humanity, reflect upon yourſelf; nor are *my* vices an excuſe for *yours*.

"My tears awakened his ſenſibility. He deſiſted from holding me; he fell at my feet; and attributed his conduct to an exceſs of deſpair, in which his heart was not concerned. He ſwore never to offend again, and entreated me ſometimes to ſee him. I promiſed any thing to be freed from him, as I dreaded a repetition of his violence; and told him, that on condition he would not accompany, or follow me home, I would ſee him the next morning, at the ſame place. He

agreed to it, and ſuffered me to leave him.

"On my return to the houſe, I reflected on the conduct of Menel, and conſidered it as the conſequence of my own guilt, and that ſhame and miſery were my juſt attendants every where. I propoſed leaving the farm-houſe, and retire to ſome other place in the country, where I might live unnoticed, and unknown; when, unexpectedly, I was ſurpriſed with receiving a viſit from Mrs. Beaumont. She was acquainted with my ſtory; and as ſhe had formerly a very lively friendſhip for me, ſhe could not reſolve to abandon me to myſelf. She came purpoſely, to urge me to return with her, and I agreed to her propoſal, I have been with her ſome time, and her conduct to me is both delicate and friendly. She never appears to obſerve my melancholy, for fear, leſt by noticing it, ſhe ſhould recall the cauſe more forcibly to my imagination. I hear that Mr. Menel has left England, and with it, I ſincerely hope, every diſquietude."

I thanked

I thanked Miſs Johnſon for her recital, and entreated her to endeavour to overcome her ſorrow. I aſſured her of the continuance of my friendſhip, and though I muſt honeſtly confeſs, that the prepoſſeſſion I had before entertained in her favour was entirely at an end, I yet ſought for her company as much as I had before done.

Perhaps, had I never known Mrs. Moleſworth, the knowledge of Miſs Johnſon's ſtory might not have abated my regard for her; but I could not reflect on the amiable and unhappy Louiſa, and the patience with which ſhe ſupported her misfortunes, without feeling ſentiments which amounted almoſt to hatred, for the occaſion of them. I bluſhed at the injuſtice I had done to Mrs. Beaumont in imagining that her ſilence reſpecting Miſs Johnſon's melancholy, proceeded from knowing herſelf to be the cauſe; I was now convinced that it was owing to a motive both generous and friendly.

Notwithſtanding my partiality for Mrs. Moleſworth, in perſonal beauty Miſs John-

ſon was greatly her ſuperior. She was not very tall, but elegantly formed, and completely proportioned. Her complexion was almoſt tranſparent: ſhe was pale, but that was evidently occaſioned by grief. Her eyes were blue and languiſhing, and though ſorrow had impaired their luſtre, they were yet uncommonly piercing. Her features were regular, and her hair the moſt beautiful I had ever ſeen. She was ſenſible, and had I not had incontrovertable proofs to the contrary, I ſhould have ſaid that ſhe poſſeſſed an excellent heart.

Such was Miſs Johnſon, who in ſpite of grief and illneſs, was lovely: and notwithſtanding the almoſt inexcuſable criminality of her conduct, appeared to be amiable and virtuous. She continued for ſome time with Mrs. Beaumont, and however my heart might feel towards her, my conduct always wore the appearance of affection.

Perhaps, my dear Mr. Lewis, you may call this diſſimulation. I acknowledge it is not ſincerity, but think it is a ſpe-

a ſpecies of *in*ſincerity that your candour will find an excuſe for. She was unhappy; and though ſhe had deviated from virtue, and had violated the laws of hoſpitality by injuring a friend who confided in and loved her, yet ſhe was perfectly ſenſible of her offences, and felt them as ſeverely, and judged as rigidly of them, as it was poſſible for human nature to do.

She ſoon grew tired of London, and went again into the country, from whence ſhe wrote me a letter, which, as it will ſerve to ſhew the ſtate of her mind more clearly than I can otherwiſe do, I have copied it for your peruſal.

" Since neither your friendſhip for
" Mrs. Moleſworth, nor the knowledge
" of my guilt, have had force to deſtroy
" your kindneſs for me, and that you
" ſtill are intereſted in my fate, I could
" not omit informing you of the reſolu-
" tion I have taken. In leſs than a week
" I ſhall leave England, and take refuge
" in a place which, I fear, is oftener the
" retreat of guilt and deſpair, than a
" ſanc-

" ſanctuary for a blameleſs heart, led
" thither by piety alone. I have chang-
" ed my religion, and perhaps I may ex-
" perience in a convent more tranquillity
" than the world can beſtow. I do not
" expect ever to regain my peace of mind;
" on the contrary, my melancholy in-
" creaſes every hour. And now let me
" confeſs a weakneſs, which I could not
" avow before you.

" The grave, ſo far from having ex-
" tinguiſhed my paſſion for Mr. Moleſ-
" worth, has, if poſſible, given additi-
" onal ſtrength to it. The tenderneſs
" and affection which he ſhewed me in
" his laſt moments, his fear for my mi-
" ſery, which exceeded every conſidera-
" tion on his own account, ſo entirely
" ſoftened my mind, and won upon my
" heart, that were I to exiſt for ages,
" the recollection of it could never be
" effaced. I fancy I ſee him; I talk to
" him in ſleep; I have him in my arms;
" and declare the exceſs of my paſſion.
" I awake, and tears and ſighs ſucceed;
" partly from the recollection of my
" crime, but more for the loſs of him.

" What

"What relief have I then from a peni-
"tence which, I fear, is far from being
"real; ſince, even though I am depriv-
"ed of the power of renewing my guilt,
"I am criminal in idea?

"From your friendſhip I hope for pi-
"ty. And oh! my dear Mrs. Ledwich,
"pray for the wretched Olivia, that her
"miſery may have expiated her offences,
"and that Heaven, in its mercy, may be
"pleaſed to take her to itſelf."

I returned her an immediate anſwer to this letter, and uſed every argument in my power to diſſuade her from putting her deſign in execution, but it had not the deſired effect, as ſhe left England immediately after, and retired to a convent in France. I received a letter from her when ſhe was ſettled in her aſylum, but had the vexation to find that her regret purſued her with as much rigour as before.

Mrs. Beaumont was greatly afflicted at the loſs of Miſs Johnſon, as ſhe had a very ſincere affection for her. She informed

formed me, that before her knowledge of Mr. Moleſworth, there never was a woman poſſeſſed of a more amiable diſpoſition, or more univerſally eſteemed and beloved.

I was chagrined at the diſappointment I had experienced, as I hoped to have met with a friend in Miſs Melville, which vaniſhed on my knowledge of her being Miſs Johnſon. I now ſcarcely knew how to employ my time; I had no reſources within myſelf; as, unfortunately for me, my happineſs was ever dependent upon others.

LET-

LETTER XII.

MR. and Mrs. Shelburn went down to Leſlie Grove, and as we always correſponded, ſhe wrote to me from that place. After communicating a great deal of intelligence about the neighbourhood in general, ſhe mentioned Sir Robert Dixon and his family. She told me alſo, that Mr. Manley appeared to be very unhappy; and though he behaved unexceptionably to his wife, it was the univerſal opinion he was in love with another; but who that other was ſhe could not ſay.

Mrs. Shelburn was ignorant how much I was intereſted in what ſhe had told me. I grieved for Manley's ſituation, and was aſtoniſhed at a conſtancy ſo ſeldom met with in his ſex. I was both flattered and delighted at the encomiums ſhe beſtowed upon him; for as Thompſon makes his Sigiſmunda ſay,

" The heart of woman knows no truer joy,
" Is never flatter'd with ſuch dear enchantment,
" ('Tis more than ſelfiſh vanity) as when
" She hears the praiſes of the man ſhe loves."

I frequently heard from her, and her account of Manley ever was the ſame.

Colonel Iredell at this time came to England; he had been a few weeks in France, where he had a ſiſter in the ſame convent with Miſs Johnſon. She knew of my acquaintance with the Colonel, and when he called to take leave of his ſiſter, before his departure for England, ſhe begged Miſs Iredell to give her brother a letter to deliver to me, and this was the letter I mentioned to you I had received. When the Colonel waited on me with it, he informed me of his marriage. It was to a lady of a large fortune, and I found afterwards, of an amiable diſpoſition. I was pleaſed at his proſpects of happineſs, as he was in every reſpect a worthy man, and one to whom I ſincerely wiſhed every felicity.

When he was gone, I opened Olivia's letter with eagerneſs: not that I flattered myſelf with the hopes of hearing any thing that would give me pleaſure; I therefore was not diſappointed when I read what follows.

"You

" You was very right, my dear Mrs. " Ledwich, in your opinion, that I ſhould " neither experience eaſe or comfort " from my reſidence in this place: I " ſcarcely dared to hope it myſelf, and " therefore am not diſappointed. If my " companions in ſorrow and deſpair " could alleviate my portion of ſuffer- " ings, they are not wanting here; but " the knowledge of others miſery only " ſerves to aggravate my own.

" There is an alteration in my mind, " yet I am ſtill wretched. I think leſs " of the object of my criminal affections, " and more of my injured friend. Lou- " iſa's image purſues me every where; " it haunts me even in my dreams. " Sometimes it aſſumes the harſh tone " of reproach, and at others, the mild " look of compaſſion.

" Could I hope that the ruin which " I have brought upon myſelf, would " be conſidered as an atonement for the " deſtruction of her, I ſhould rejoice in " my ſufferings, and only lament that " they were not more ſevere. Suffer- " ings, did I ſay? Oh, my dear madam,

I ſhould

" I ſhould be compleatly happy. In this " world every thing is loſt to me. My " lover, reputation, friends; all, all, " are loſt! Believe me I could look with " contempt and diſregard on every earth- " ly occurrence, but it is the dread of " what is yet to come; the fear that " my torments ſhould purſue me beyond " the grave;—it is that which weighs " upon my heart, and oppreſſes me al- " moſt beyond my power to ſupport. " Were my puniſhments confined to this " life, I ſhould indeed be both weak and " wicked to utter one complaint.

" The gloom which ſurrounds me in " this place, is perfectly correſpondent " with my feelings. Some few here are " contented, but I think I may venture " to pronounce that none are happy. I " have been the confidante of many; and " though the occurrences of their lives " have been various, yet all agree in " one circumſtance, which is, that of " being wretched. Few are ſo candid " as to acknowledge that their diſtreſſes " originate from themſelves, but univer- " ſally attribute their misfortunes either

to

" to accident, or to the vices of others;
" though even from their own recital,
" I have clearly ſeen that irregular paſſi-
" ons, imagined wants, or the diſap-
" pointment of wiſhes, which they had
" in reality no right to indulge, have
" been the real cauſes of their grief.
" I perfectly agree with Dr. Young, that
" our faults are at the bottom of our
" pains; and that there is ſcarcely a diſ-
" treſs, which human nature can ſuſtain,
" but if we would impartially examine
" our hearts, we ſhould find owed its
" exiſtence either to vice, or imprudence.
" In my opinion, this extends not only
" to the diſorders of the mind but bo-
" dy. I may perhaps be miſtaken, but
" I ſpeak from experience, and I think
" that is the moſt likely way of being
" acquainted with the truth. It is, I
" acknowledge, infinitely more flatter-
" ing to charge our ſufferings on any
" thing but ourſelves, and indulge the
" belief that we are innocent of our
" own misfortunes; but the fallacy will,
" and muſt, ſometime have an end.

" Excuſe me, my dear friend, for
" troubling you with my obſervations

" and

" and complaints, and believe me, the " recollection of you ſometimes recalls " me back into the world, which I have " renounced for ever: a world which I " might once have been happy in, had " I not ſtudiouſly deſtroyed even the " poſſibility of being ſo.

" In this place, prayer is conſidered " as the only buſineſs of our lives: but " the ſettled hours for it, and the unwil- " lingneſs, at times, that ſome here ex- " preſs to join in it, ſerve to make it " wear more the appearance of a taſk " which muſt be performed, than the " fervent effuſions of the heart, which " conſiders devotion as its only pleaſure. " In ſhort, it appears to me more like " a rigorous conſtraint, than penitence " or piety.—Yet, here muſt I end my " days. I do not repent of the ſtep I " have taken, nor conſider the change " of my religion as an additional crime. " I am ſure, my dear madam, you have " more ſenſe than to regard mere out- " ward forms: and though I acknow- " ledge, *that* religion which is the moſt " ſimple in itſelf, and the freeſt from

" thoſe

" thoſe ceremonies attendant on the one " I have choſen, may be the moſt accep- " table, yet I flatter myſelf that the " heart is the only thing conſidered; " and mine deſpiſes every outward ſhow, " and conſiders only its offences, and " the wiſh to atone for them. I am no " bigot, and did not embrace this faith " from a conviction that it was better " than my former one, but to obtain the " advantage of a retreat in this place, " where prayer and penitence would " alone employ my time and thoughts. " Beſides, whilſt I remained in the world, " I was obliged to conform to ſome of " its cuſtoms; and as I could not, with " a breaking heart, affect gaiety, my " melancholy ſubjected me to a thouſand " enquiries, which added to my diſtreſs " and affliction—but here it paſſes unno- " ticed; my deſpair is unmarked by any " one, and the wretchedneſs of an indi- " vidual is unobſerved, where *all* are " companions in miſery.

" Believe me, dear madam, that in " the midſt of my own ſorrow, I ſend " to Heaven prayers for your felicity,

" and

" and moſt ardently hope they may be " heard.

" Excuſe my troubling you with this " long letter; but I could not reſiſt the " inclination I had to write, when I had " ſo favourable an opportunity of ſend- " ing it.

" That every bleſſing may attend you, " my dear Mrs. Ledwich, is the ſincere " wiſh and prayer of

" Your unfortunate,
" But affectionate,
" Olivia Johnson."

I dropped a tear of pity on her wretched fate; and the tenderneſs I had formerly felt for her, took poſſeſſion of my heart.

When I ſaw Colonel Iredell, I enquired if his ſiſter had ever mentioned Miſs Johnſon to him. He replied, that ſhe had; and had informed him, Olivia was generally beloved; and that though ſhe was always dejected, there was an invariable ſweetneſs in her diſpoſition, which made her eſteemed through the whole convent.

I com-

I communicated the Colonel's intelligence to Mrs. Beaumont, who received it with pleaſure, as her affection was a very ſincere one. She told me, that almoſt all the friends of Olivia, on the knowledge of her paſt conduct had agreed to renounce her for ever; "but," added Mrs. Beaumont, "I could not conſider that ſeverity as juſt. That ſhe had ſinned, I knew; but I was ignorant of the circumſtances that occaſioned her tranſgreſſion, and her temptation to the crime: beſides, it was not my place to puniſh; and I was ſo well acquainted with her heart and mind, that I was convinced her remorſe for the crime would be a ſufficient puniſhment, without increaſing it by reproaches or neglect. Her *enemies* could do no more; but, ſurely, it was a *friend*'s part to ſupport and endeavour to comfort her. I induced her to quit her retirement, and ſhould have been happy could I have perſuaded her never to have left me. She ever ſeemed ſenſible of my affection, and received my endeavours to pleaſe, in a manner that ſhewed me ſhe would, if poſſible, conquer her uneaſineſs for my ſake; but,

but, alas! it was out of her power—and ſhe is now loſt to me for ever!"

Mrs. Beaumont here burſt into tears. I entreated her to reconcile herſelf to the loſs of her friend, as ſhe muſt be aſſured ſhe never could have been happy, where every one about her was acquainted with her misfortunes. I repreſented, that as ſhe had a great ſhare of ſenſibility, the place where all were ignorant of her ſtory, was the moſt likely to reſtore her in ſome degree to her former tranquillity.

Mrs. Beaumont acknowledged the truth of what I had ſaid, but her affection for Miſs Johnſon made the eternal ſeparation from her, a very painful one.

Colonel Iredell introduced his lady to me. She was very pretty, very lively, and very good-natured. I received much pleaſure from her company, and as ſhe was ignorant of the Colonel's former *penchant* for me, we continued on a very intimate footing. I could hardly forbear ſmiling, on the firſt introduction, to ſee him preſent his wife to me, when he had a thouſand times ſwore, that he never

ver could love another; and that if I refuſed him, he would continue ſingle the remainder of his life. Yet Iredell appeared very much attached to the lady he had choſen; nor could I perceive the leaſt remains of a paſſion, which he had ſo often ſaid would terminate only with his exiſtence.

Do not think, my dear Sir, that I conſider it as a fault in him: I only mention it to ſhew the ſtrange inconſiſtencies that are found even in the beſt of your ſex.

I paſſed my time chiefly with Mrs. Iredell and Mrs. Beaumont. For the laſt of theſe ladies I had a very ſincere regard and eſteem. She had ſhewn ſo much conſideration, and real goodneſs of heart, in her behaviour to Miſs Johnſon, that my reſpect for her amounted almoſt to veneration.

I ſtill continued to hear from Mrs. Shelburn, who repeatedly and ſtrenuouſly urged me to pay her a viſit at Leſlie Grove. I ſhould have complied with her entreaties if Manley had not been ſituated ſo near her. It would have been unjuſt both

both to him and myſelf, to have run the hazard of meeting, as it would certainly have been productive of pain to us both.

Colonel Iredell introduced to me his lady's brother, who was an officer in his regiment.

Captain Stanley was, in ſome reſpects, a pleaſing companion, but his perſon ſo diſagreeable, that it was almoſt diſguſting; and were we to form our opinion of a man by his countenance, it would be greatly to the Captain's diſadvantage.

He affected to hold women in the utmoſt contempt; but I rather imagine his diſlike to them was not natural, but acquired by their diſregard of him. Whenever they were unfortunately the ſubject of converſation, he would ſtart into the moſt ſilly abuſe, and maintain, before huſbands, fathers, or brothers, that thoſe women who appeared virtuous, were only poſſeſſed of a larger ſhare of artifice; and that thoſe whom the world called bad, were, in reality, no way different, but by having a leſs ſhare of hypocriſy,

and

and ſhewing themſelves in their natural colours, without any diſguiſe or concealment. Sentiments like theſe, however ludicrouſly delivered, are of little credit to the men who utter them, as it is an abſurd vanity and a cruel injuſtice in them to arrogate to themſelves every excellence, and exclude the women from a participation. Cuſtom and education, it is granted, have given the former many advantages over the latter, yet the virtues of the heart are beſtowed in common; and in that reſpect I do not conſider either ſex as ſuperior to the other.

Yet notwithſtanding Capt. Stanley's boaſted indifference, and affected antipathy to our ſex, whenever he thought himſelf unobſerved, he attempted to be gallant to me. I confeſs he was awkward enough in his endeavours to pleaſe; and ſufficiently ſo to convince me that he never before had made the endeavour.

Whenever he found me alone, he would ſay every thing in his power to make me believe that he loved me; and in company, entertain me with a general invective againſt the ſex—in which, as I

was

was a woman, of courſe I muſt be included. Had the Captain been poſſeſſed of every requiſite to make himſelf agreeable, yet that circumſtance would have given me a diſguſt to him.

One evening when he was enlarging on the uſual topic, on which it muſt be owned he expatiated with great fluency —Col. Iredell told him, he never could believe he advanced his real ſentiments, but only did it to ſupport the ſpirit of converſation by a little neceſſary contradiction. Stanley ſwore he ſpoke what he thought; when a lady who was preſent, told him he might have ſpared himſelf the trouble of an oath, as the moment ſhe looked in his face ſhe was aſſured of his ſincerity. The Captain was a little out of countenance at this remark, and the laugh was univerſally againſt him.

He ſtill perſiſted in his addreſſes to me, and you may believe that I totally diſregarded them; for, as Sterne ſays, "I am "convinced that the man who has not "a real veneration for the whole ſex, can "never love one woman as he ought."

It

It is ſo long ſince I have read Yorick, I am not certain that I have given you his very words, but I know I have conveyed to you their meaning.

Colonel Iredell ſent for his ſiſter from France, where I told you ſhe was a boarder in the ſame convent with Miſs Johnſon. On her arrival in England, of courſe ſhe was introduced to me. I was not greatly prepoſſeſſed in her favour, from her firſt appearance; for though ſhe was handſome, her manner was too haughty and aſſuming: her ſtyle of beauty was more of the maſculine kind, and ſhe had very little the appearance of feminine delicacy. Her features were regular and handſome, but infinitely too ſtrong for a female face. In ſhort, though ſhe had beauty, it was altogether on too large a ſcale, which to me deſtroyed the effects of it. She was ſo unlike her ſiſter-in-law, who was very little and extremely pretty, that when they were together, the contraſt was ſo ſtriking, that it was greatly to Miſs Iredell's diſadvantage. Her underſtanding was of the ſame kind as her perſon—

more

more ſtrong than pleaſing; and though every one that knew her allowed her to be ſenſible, yet I never was acquainted with any that was pleaſed with her converſation.

You ſee, my dear Sir, though I loſt a lover in the Colonel, that I gained, in exchange, an encreaſed circle of acquaintance; and though they were not all very pleaſing, they ſerved to amuſe me.

Miſs Iredell, improved upon a more intimate knowledge of her, though ſhe never was perfectly agreeable to me. I aſked her many queſtions about Miſs Johnſon, and her account correſponded with the character ſhe had given of her to her brother.

When Mrs. Beaumont was acquainted, that Miſs Iredell came from the ſame convent where Olivia had retired, ſhe was never more pleaſed than when ſhe could engage her in converſation, to enquire a thouſand particulars of her dear friend. She would frequently ſay to me, "I dare believe, my dear Mrs. Ledwich, you

" you are aſtoniſhed at my partiality for
" her, when you reflect on ſome circum-
" ſtances of her life, and perhaps attri-
" bute it either to weakneſs, or the want
" of a proper deteſtation of guilt; but
" it does not proceed from either. On
" my firſt knowledge of Olivia, ſhe was
" innocent and virtuous, and the joy and
" delight of all who were acquainted
" with her. I was ignorant of her crime,
" till the death of Mr. Moleſworth put it
" out of her power of repeating it, and
" I then was a witneſs to her unfeigned
" anguiſh and contrition, to that ſincere
" repentance and remorſe which ever at-
" tended her. We are taught to be-
" lieve, that a real penitence will be ac-
" cepted hereafter as an expiation for our
" ſins: and hard is that heart which will
" not admit of it here. And ſhall I then,
" a poor frail mortal, be ſevere in my
" judgment, on a tenderly eſteemed and
" beloved friend?"

I am convinced Mrs. Beaumont's partiality for Miſs Johnſon, did not need an excuſe; that the ſincerity of her friendſhip did honour to her heart; and her

generous allowance for the faults of others, convinced me ſhe was herſelf incapable of committing them. In this I ſpeak my real ſentiments, as I ever conſidered Mrs. Beaumont's principles as an honour to human nature: and I am aſſured, if the generality of women were like her, that though many might commit errors, few would perſiſt in them; and thoſe that did, muſt be naturally abandoned, and unworthy the leaſt conſideration.

Colonel Iredell was very much attached to his ſiſter: but a ſtrong family affection is, I believe, the characteriſtic of the Scotch. He was infinitely more amiable than his ſiſter; but perhaps her manner prejudiced me againſt her, and blinded me to her real merit. I cannot poſitively affirm that was not the caſe; for it happens but too often, that when we imagine ourſelves the moſt impartial, we are biaſſed by ſome ridiculous diſguſt, or prepoſſeſſed by ſome trifling quality which wears the appearance of virtue. She was the averſion of Capt. Stanley, and I have frequently heard him ſay, that

that he wondered how any one could be ſurpriſed at his diſlike of women, when the whole ſex was compoſed, either of ſuch inſignificant triflers as his own ſiſter, or ſuch poſitive, domineering, arrogant ones as the Colonel's. He would ſometimes, indeed, have the good manners to acknowledge, that I was an exception, and that I was free from thoſe follies which he condemned; and to uſe his own words, nothing of a woman about me but my perſon. His praiſe neither gave me pleaſure, or added to my vanity; I deſpiſed him for his mean opinion of a ſex which nature had made his equals, and, perhaps, did cuſtom allow us the ſame privileges, we might be ſuperior.

Do not imagine, my dear Mr. Lewis, that I mean by this to affect a ſuperiority that does not belong to me; I am ready to allow your ſex, in many things, the pre-eminence; but I cannot ſubmit to the degradations which fools, like Stanley, would have us women put up with: and whilſt the men will allow us to be any thing, depend upon it I ſhall not be aſſuming.

You will juſtly ſay, my good friend, what is this to you? And that I have no cauſe to condemn your ſentiments on the ſubject juſt mentioned.——True—I acknowledge it; but in relating paſt circumſtances to you, I feel the ſame emotions I did at the time they happened, though that time be ever ſo diſtant; you will therefore, I hope, excuſe me.

LET-

LETTER XIII.

SIR William and Lady Harley had been ſome time abroad, and I knew nothing of their return to England, till one evening being at the opera with the Colonel, Mrs. Iredell, and Captain Stanley, I ſaw Sir William, and another gentleman, in the box oppoſite to us. He bowed to me as to a formal acquaintance, and with more familiarity to the Captain; and I had the vexation to find they were intimately acquainted. He left the gentleman he was with, and came round to us. He addreſſed me with the moſt eaſy aſſurance, and had the effrontery to offer to take my hand whilſt he enquired after my health. I withdrew it, and anſwered him by the ſame queſtion relating to Lady Harley. He did not appear the leaſt diſconcerted, but replied, that ſhe was very well. His behaviour all the evening, notwithſtanding the chilling reſerve of my manner, was particularly aſſiduous and tender. I was

at

at a loſs to what cauſe to attribute his conduct; and, during the performance, was very uneaſy, and much embarraſſed.

When the Opera was at an end, Sir William attempted to ſeize my hand, in order to lead me to my carriage: but as it was what I apprehended, I immediately gave it to the Colonel. Sir William ſighed, and affected to look diſappointed.

On my return home, I gave way to a thouſand reflections. All tenderneſs for Harley was entirely at an end; but I could not receive, without confuſion, looks, whoſe tenderneſs had once power over my very ſoul, and which I had been uſed to return: our eyes had too long been taught to expreſs every ſentiment of our hearts to each other, and it was impoſſible now to feign ignorance of their meaning.

I could not conceive by what unaccountable caprice Sir William was actuated. He deſerted me at a time when I loved him to diſtraction; and now I had regained my indifference, he ſought once more

more to make himſelf pleaſing to me. Immediately I accuſed myſelf of vanity, in imagining he had any ſerious conſiderations about me. He wanted, I thought, amuſement for the evening, and I was ſunk low enough in my own opinion to believe that to be his only motive for his behaviour. I therefore hoped that he would, in a few hours, entirely forget me, and I reſolved never to expoſe myſelf a ſecond time to the poſſibility of meeting him. But the conjecture I had formed of his ſentiments I ſoon found I was miſtaken in, for the next morning brought me a letter from him, which I have here copied.

" Your behaviour to me laſt night was " no more reſerved than I had every " reaſon to expect. You was then ig- " norant of my real ſentiments. Would " to Heaven I could dare to flatter my- " ſelf with the hope, that the know- " ledge of them would make you leſs " cruel! Believe me, too lovely Amelia, " that I adore you with the moſt ardent " fervency of paſſion, and that it would " not be in the power of your whole ſex

" to

"to recompence me for the loſs of you. "Forgive then a falſhood which I do "not attempt to excuſe; and believe "me, that heart can never wander which "knows, by experience, the value of "merit, and how ineffectual every plea-"ſure and endeavour after happineſs "muſt be when it is totally deprived of "it. I reſt all my hopes on your good-"neſs, and wait your anſwer with an "impatience that I cannot expreſs. Al-"low me but one interview with you, "and if I do not then convince you of "my ſincerity, you ſhall never more be "troubled with the complaints or ſolici-"tations of

"The adoring

"HARLEY."

I read this letter with a mixture of diſdain and reſentment; but fearful he ſhould conſtrue my ſilence into an admiſſion of his viſits, I ſat down immediately to anſwer it, which I did in theſe words:

"Fidelity

"Fidelity in attachments, or conſiſt-
"ency in falſhood, is, I think, what
"every man ought to adhere to: but
"your preſent changeability is, in my
"eyes, more contemptible than your
"former deſertion of me was baſe and
"ungenerous. The knowledge of your
"ſentiments would never alter my con-
"duct; I know what your actions have
"been, and they are more convincing
"than words. I can ſcarcely believe
"that the loſs of my affection can be
"attended with regret to you, when you
"ſo ſtudiouſly, by every art in your
"power, endeavoured to alienate it:
"You ſucceeded, and my heart has re-
"gained its indifference. Believe me
"when I tell you, it is among the num-
"ber of impoſſibilities you ſhould ever
"again be able to inſpire ſentiments
"which I now bluſh for having once felt.
"I ſincerely forgive you every falſhood
"you have practiſed towards me; but at
"the ſame inſtant aſſure you, you can-
"not a ſecond time deceive me. The
"interview which you ſolicit I certainly
"ſhall not grant; it could not be of the

"leaſt advantage to you if I did, as I "muſt ever behold with diſdain the man "who proſtitutes his honour to ſerve the "purpoſes of his abandoned heart. I "therefore inſiſt, if we ſhould ever "chance to meet in future, that you "will conſider me as a perfect ſtranger, "for as ſuch I ſhall ever behave to you. "It will be unneceſſary to trouble your-"ſelf again to write to me, as I ſhall "return every letter unopened; but if, "by miſtaking the hand, I ſhould be led "to break the ſeal, I ſhall inſtantly cauſe "it to be conveyed to Lady Harley."

I diſpatched this letter immediately, and it had the deſired effect. If we met at any public place, he would fix his eyes upon me, and affect to ſigh, but he never addreſſed me. I was ſatisfied at this part of his conduct; for the renewal of his former endeavours to pleaſe were productive of real pain to me.

Colonel Iredell, his lady, and ſiſter, were going for a ſhort time to Bath. They aſked me to accompany them; and as I knew that in London I muſt frequently

quently ſee Sir William, I agreed to their propoſal. When Captain Stanley knew of my determination, he alſo joined the party.

The Colonel and his Lady had a numerous acquaintance there, and I was very well pleaſed with my intimacy with them.—The Captain met with an old friend of his at Bath, a Mr. Hanmore; he was about four-and-thirty,—his perſon elegant and handſome. He ſeemed to be unhappy, which Mrs. Iredell informed me was owing to a diſappointment in love, and had been very ungenerouſly treated by the woman of his affections;—yet he always ſpoke of the ſex with the utmoſt tenderneſs and regard:—and whenever Stanley advanced his degrading opinions, always defended the women with warmth and ſenſibility.

Miſs Iredell did not appear to regard Mr. Hanmore with indifference. He certainly was, in every reſpect, a man that no woman would have had reaſon to bluſh at having a partiality for. Miſs Iredell's eſteem for him was apparent to every

every body, nor did it eſcape the obſervation of Mr. Hanmore. As I before obſerved his manner was particularly aſſiduous and engaging, it is not to be wondered at, that a girl, who was ignorant of the cuſtoms of the world, and the unmeaning gallantries of the men, ſhould miſtake attention for love. I was ſorry to ſee her prepoſſeſſion in his favour, as I thought there was but little probability he would ever return it:—and in this conjecture I was ſoon convinced I was right.

Mr. Hanmore ſent to me, to requeſt half an hour's converſation, I was a little ſurprized,—but complied immediately.—I could not conceive what he wiſhed to ſay to me,—though, I muſt own, I did not expect what I found it was.

When he came, he made a thouſand apologies for the liberty he had taken, and appeared in the utmoſt embarraſſment at declaring the cauſe of his viſit.

"I ſcarcely know how to begin on a ſubject," ſaid Mr. Hanmore, "which wears

wears ſo much the appearance of vanity; but I hope you will do me the juſtice of attributing what I am going to ſay, to the real cauſe, and not to a motive ſo contemptibly deſpicable."

I replied, that on any ſubject he might ever command my moſt favourable opinion.—He bowed,—and proceeded.

"I am flattered, my dear Mrs. Ledwich, by what you have juſt now favoured me with ſaying, and I hope no action of mine will ever induce you to alter that opinion; though I fear my conduct has been in ſome meaſure reprehenſible, as it has been miſtaken by a Lady, for whom I have a very ſincere reſpect and eſteem. In the feelings of the heart, I cannot be miſled; and I have every reaſon to imagine that Miſs Iredell honours me with a too favourable regard.

He bluſhed whilſt he ſpoke theſe laſt words, and appeared in the utmoſt confuſion.

"Do not deſpiſe me," he continued, "for what I have been ſaying: there is a ſtrange

a ſtrange capriciouſneſs in the fancy of the wiſeſt and the beſt of us,—and I, though unworthy, may perhaps, be the object of that Lady's affection. — I have ſome reaſon to believe it:—and as it never could be in my power to return it, I cannot bring myſelf to trifle with an innocent and tender heart. My own misfortunes in that paſſion, have taught me conſideration for others. I have ſuffered by the falſhood of one of your ſex, but I ſhould deſpiſe myſelf if I could conſider *all* as worthleſs, becauſe the *one* I truſted in has deceived me.——I therefore choſe to incur the imputation of vain and ridiculous, rather than perſiſt in a conduct which might be productive of pain to another.——I conſider the happineſs of your ſex in too ſacred a light; nor in my gayeſt, wildeſt moments, ever made one profeſſion which was not dictated by ſincerity;—or, for my own amuſement, endeavoured to perſuade any woman that I felt an affection for her, or wantonly ſtrove to inſpire ſentiments in her heart, to which my own was a ſtranger. Let me then entreat

treat you, my dear madam, to acquaint your friend with the ſubject of our converſation; and as no pangs are ſo ſevere as an hopeleſs affection, I truſt I ſhall be excuſed for the part I have acted.—If ſhe has unfortunately miſtaken the natural regard which I entertain for your ſex for a particular partiality, ſhe will now be freed from an error, which, if perſiſted in too long, might have endangered her tranquillity."—He bowed —and took his leave.

I conſidered Mr. Hanmore's conduct in a very favourable light. The partiality of Miſs Iredell for him was very evident, and he could not, with juſtice, be accuſed of vanity in the declaration he had made:—on the contrary, in my opinion, his deſtroying at once her hopes, before ſhe could have entertained a ſerious paſſion for him, was truly commendable.

It was a very diſagreeable taſk to me, to have to relate Mr. Hanmore's converſation to her; — but my friendſhip for Miſs Iredell, I thought, compelled me to do

do it. She heard me with a great deal of diſcompoſure, and frankly acknowledged, that ſhe never knew a man for whom ſhe entertained ſuch favourable ſentiments. She admired his candour, and ſhe had too much in her own diſpoſition to be offended at the ingenuouſneſs of his conduct.

Pride, as I before remarked to you, was a very predominant paſſion of this lady's;——it now helped to ſupport her. She imputed his aſſiduities to pleaſe, to an affection on his ſide, and, flattered by that thought, gave way to her own, before a declaration from him warranted her indulging it. His perſon and addreſs were very pleaſing, and the partiality of Miſs Iredell, her inexperience, and every other circumſtance conſidered, made her conduct at leaſt juſtifiable. When they afterwards met, they appeared in the greateſt confuſion; but the lady firſt recovered from it. She behaved to him with the moſt engaging complaiſance, and by her manner ſeemed to ſay, that ſhe would not have him imagine ſhe was offended at his conduct. He ſeemed to under-

underſtand it in that light, and they were tolerable company.

For ſome time this continued: but whether Miſs Iredell's paſſion for him was ſtronger than I at firſt imagined, or that ſhe could not overcome the mortification her pride had received, I cannot pretend to determine; but ſhe deſired her brother to conſent to her returning to the convent; to which, with ſome reluctance, he agreed. I entreated her, when ſhe arrived there, to write me word how ſhe found Miſs Johnſon. She complied with my requeſt, and I received a ſhort, but very polite letter from her, with the following one encloſed in it from Olivia.

" My dear Mrs. Ledwich,

" Miſs Iredell tells me, you are ſtill " intereſted in my fate, and that you " have deſired her to inform you, if I " had yet regained my peace of mind; " it was that which induced me again to " write to you, as no one can give ſo " ſatisfactory an anſwer to that queſtion " as myſelf.

" You

"You will, I am ſure, receive plea-
"ſure from the information, that I have,
"in ſome meaſure, recovered my tran-
"quillity. Heaven, in pity to the ſeve-
"rity of my ſufferings, has calmed the
"emotions of my mind, and I can at
"laſt look towards eternity with more
"compoſure, and free from thoſe appre-
"henſions which before diſtracted me.
"Do not imagine that this alteration
"proceeds from inſenſibility:—I have
"not loſt the conſciouſneſs of guilt;
"and whilſt life and thought remain,
"ſhall ever retain the recollection of the
"enormity of it. But I look forward
"with more confidence; I have been
"taught to believe, that deſpair is both
"ſinful and impious, and that the mer-
"cy of my Creator is equal to his juſ-
"tice. Great have been my offences,
"and great have been my ſufferings and
"repentance.

"Oh, my dear madam, you are igno-
"rant of the torments of a guilty mind.
"Had I been perfectly innocent, had
"the unfortunate Moleſworth been
"my huſband, great would have been

"my

" my miſery at his loſs,—even if it had
" happened by the common courſe of
" nature, and I had been, by degrees,
" prepared for his diſſolution; but think
" what I muſt endure from the ſudden-
" neſs and violence of it,—and from
" the knowledge that it was the puniſh-
" of my guilt!——His wife, his child,
" both dead—an amiable and a worthy
" man obliged to leave his country,
" who had, by his partiality for a guilty
" wretch, perpetrated a crime, which,
" on any other occaſion, he would not
" for worlds have committed.

" When my thoughts were always
" employed on this ſubject, can you
" wonder that I ſhould be a prey to
" gloom and diſtraction? Not that I
" have, by being familiarized to the
" thought, overcome my horror of it:—
" it ſtill exiſts; but the hopes of for-
" giveneſs, which, however criminal I
" am, I ſtill entertain, have ſoftened my
" ſufferings, and ſoothed my ſoul to ſome
" degree of peace. I looked round the
" world; I found myſelf abandoned
" and deſerted by all but one, the gene-
" rous,

" rous, the ſincere Mrs. Beaumont, who
" ſtill befriended me: every one elſe re-
" garded me as the wretch I was. Oh!
" my dear madam, contempt and infa-
" my are bleſſings, in compariſon to the
" conſciouſneſs of having deſervedly in-
" curred them.

" I was not for ſome time truly ſenſi-
" ble of my guilt. I fear, at firſt, I on-
" ly felt, I only lamented the puniſh-
" ment of it. I adored Mr. Moleſworth;
" I wept, I grieved for his loſs,—and
" forgot, at that time my own crimes:
" —but that deluſion was not of long
" continuance. I awakened to a right
" ſenſe of my conduct, and my miſery
" was unſpeakably increaſed. I am now
" happy, compared to what I then was.
" The certainty that this place, where I
" at preſent am, muſt alſo be my grave,
" my eternal divorce from the world;
" even my ſeparation from Mrs. Beau-
" mont and yourſelf, are not devoid of
" pleaſure. I have ſtudiouſly given up
" all that I thought were likely for a mo-
" ment, to detach me from my own re-
" flections. I have devoted myſelf to

" prayer

" prayer and contrition, and have forgot
" every thing but my wiſh for forgive-
" neſs.

" This is the laſt time I ſhall indulge
" myſelf in the pleaſure of writing to
" you. It is, I acknowledge, a great
" conſolation to me, to reveal to you
" the various feelings of my heart, and
" for that reaſon ſhall deprive myſelf
" of it. I ought not to endeavour at hap-
" pineſs here, and conſider every thing
" that, for one moment, recalls my
" thoughts from their wonted employ-
" ment, to be in ſome degree ſinful.—
" You will never more hear from me,
" but I ſhall never forget you.——Your
" friendſhip would once have been both
" a pleaſure and a real ſatisfaction to me,
" but I am now loſt to every thing but
" grief; yet believe me when I tell you,
" I ſhall never ceaſe to wiſh and pray for
" your felicity."

I never heard from Miſs Johnſon after this, but ſometimes from Miſs Iredell, and had always the ſatisfaction of hearing that Olivia wore the appearance of more

more compoſure, than ſhe did on her firſt going there.

Miſs Iredell never mentioned Mr. Hanmore; and as I imagined it was her wiſh to forget him, I was alſo ſilent on the ſubject.——She declared her reſolution of never leaving the convent, and I believe perſevered in it.——I do not imagine this determination was owing entirely to a diſappointed paſſion, for ſhe even left it at firſt with great reluctance; but I ſuppoſe, her acquaintance with Mr. Hanmore did not help to reconcile her to the world.—He was frequently with us, and was an agreeable companion; his misfortunes had not ſowered his temper, and though his ſpirits were depreſſed, he was neither gloomy nor melancholy.——He was of a very ſocial diſpoſition, and was calculated to give pleaſure to ſociety, as well as to receive it.

We had made our ſtay at Bath much longer than we at firſt intended,—and I believe ſhould have remained there, if Colonel Iredell had not received letters which obliged him to return to town;

we

we therefore agreed to accompany him. —Mr Hanmore parted from us with reluctance, but he had an invincible aversion to London, or, as he told Captain Stanley, he would not remain long behind us.

LET-

LETTER XIV.

I Had entirely forgot Sir William Harley, but a letter which I received, ſoon after my arrival in London, once more preſented him to my mind.—It came by the poſt, and as I was unacquainted with the hand, I opened it, and read what follows

" I cannot be more miſerable, by a " total diſregard of your orders, than I " am made by obeying them.—I have " implicitly obſerved what you com- " manded, yet what reward have I re- " ceived? Why then ſhould I debar my- " ſelf of the privilege of telling what I " ſuffer? In doing it, I can but incur " your contempt and hatred, and that I " find I muſt experience, let my conduct " be ever ſo conformable to your wiſhes. " Do you feel it impoſſible to forgive " one fault? I will acknowledge it to " be almoſt inexcuſable, but from you " I expected tenderneſs and conſidera- " tion.—You may return this letter to

" Lady

" Lady Harley.—You may expoſe my " paſſion to the whole world; I am in- " different about it.—Your ſcorn and " neglect are the only evils which can " wound my heart, and thoſe I already " experience.

" I can ſcarcely believe that it is to " Amelia I am writing,—*that* Amelia " that was once ſo kind,—ſo conſiderate. " We are all liable to error, and though " in the eye of reaſon, the one I have " committed may not be worthy pity " or forgiveneſs, yet love would have " taken my part, and granted what rea- " ſon had denied.—I have ſome little " conſolation in complaining, yet even " that is forbidden me;—but I will al- " ways find a way to tell you of my paſ- " ſion; and, unprovoked by your ſcorn, " and undeterred by your anger, perſiſt " in aſſuring you, that I doat on you to " madneſs and deſperation. And why " ſhould you wiſh to hinder me? You " may deſpiſe my love, but wherefore " rob me of ſo trivial a ſatisfaction?— " Have ſome compaſſion on my ſuffer- " ings, and the leſs claim I have to your

"forgiveneſs the more noble and gene-
"rous in you to grant it.—But this be-
"lieve, that even if you reſolve to per-
"ſiſt in your neglect of me, that I will
"ſtill love you to the end of my exiſt-
"ence; nor will I ever relinquiſh the
"enchanting hope, that you may one
"day be favourable to my prayers."

I did not return an anſwer to this letter. I bluſhed with anger at the indignity with which he treated me, and ſighed at the recollection of my own weakneſs, which had put it in his power to inſult me.

He ſaid he had committed but one fault; but was that of a nature to be forgiven? Nay, even had I loved him as fondly as at the firſt moment of my tenderneſs, and it had not been his own falſhood that occaſioned our ſeparation, I ſhould have purſued a ſimilar conduct, though with very different ſenſations, for I now acted conformably to the dictates of my heart. I encloſed his letter in a blank ſheet of paper, and ſent it to his houſe: in the ſame manner, I ſerved

ſeveral

ſeveral more, that he had the audacity to ſend me. I ſeldom went into public, as I wiſhed to avoid the ſight of him, and I believe he at laſt grew tired of the purſuit, as he wrote me a letter juſt before his departure from England, in which he lamented my cruelty, as he called it, in terms ſo complaining, as if I had been the original aggreſſor.

I was pleaſed when I received information that Sir William and Lady Harley were gone a ſecond time to Paris, as I was then ſecure of being freed from his importunities.

Captain Stanley ſtill plagued me with his addreſſes.—I begged him to deſiſt, and aſſured him he ſhould find he was not miſtaken if he attributed obſtinacy amongſt the numerous faults of women.

I do believe his paſſion for me was greatly againſt his inclination, and that he did all in his power to overcome it; but in ſpite of every endeavour, it had abſolute dominion over him.

The Colonel's behaviour to his wife was ſufficient to reconcile me to marriage,—and I frequently repeated to myſelf theſe lines of Milton:

" Hail wedded Love, myſterious law, true ſource
" Of human offspring, ſole propriety
" In Paradiſe of all things common elſe.
" By thee, adult'rous luſt was driven from men
" Among the beſtial herds to range; by thee,
" Founded in reaſon, loyal, juſt, and pure,
" Relations dear, and all the charities
" Of father, ſon, and brother, firſt were known,
" Far be it, that I ſhould write thee ſin or blame,
" Or think thee unbefitting holieſt place,
" Perpetual fountain of domeſtic ſweets."

Happineſs like this I never could enjoy. A miſtaken, fooliſh notion made me at firſt refuſe it, and I could not now, in honour or conſcience, conſent to be the wife of any man.——I ſtill preſerved a ſuperior tenderneſs for Mr. Manley, to what I felt for the whole world beſide. ——I opened every letter of Mrs. Shelburn's with the utmoſt avidity, and if he was not mentioned, I felt uneaſineſs and diſappointment. Yet he did not want for rivals, who were far from being deſtitute of merit.

In

In the foremoſt of which was a Mr. Lovemore. He was a gentleman of an independent, though not a very affluent fortune.——His perſonal appearance was rather pleaſing than otherwiſe, and his underſtanding was ſolid and refined. He had ſeen a great deal of the world, but had picked up none of its vices. He was of an open, candid diſpoſition, free from jealouſy and ſuſpicion; he was indeed, a man of real honour: not however, according to the modern acceptation of the word, but conſiſtent with conſcience and religion.——He might be deficient in ſome of thoſe eſſentials which conſtitute the fine gentleman, but his conduct was ever that of a good man. He urged his paſſion to me, in a manner which, though far from being confident, was yet free from awkward baſhfulneſs. I eſteemed him, and did not wiſh to encreaſe his paſſion by ſuſpence. I rejected it without anger, but in a manner which poſitively aſſured him, that he had not any thing to expect. He appeared unhappy, he acknowledged that he was ſo,—but that the conviction of his own unworthineſs had ever diſcouraged his hopes.—

hopes.——He confeſſed he was not diſappointed, as he never had the preſumption to form any expectations of ſucceſs; that my beauty and merit made it natural for him to admire and love me; and that in himſelf the want of every requiſite to pleaſe, made my rejection of him no more than he had reaſon to look for. ——He never mentioned his affection afterwards, and, as I had not forbade his viſits, I ſtill continued to ſee him on the footing of an acquaintance. I was much pleaſed that I had prevented a repetition of his paſſion, without depriving myſelf of an agreeable companion.

I had ſeveral different kinds of admirers; ſome my fortune procured me, others ſought only their own gratification; whilſt a few, more delicate by nature, wiſhed to obtain my heart, and ſought no pleaſure which they could not communicate, or judge to be reciprocal.—The latter were eaſily diſmiſſed. Convinced that they could not gain my affection, they immediately deſiſted; whilſt the intereſted and ſelfiſh, perſevered with

with an importunity which never failed of diſguſting me.

Captain Stanley perceived Mr. Lovemore's affection for me, and fearful that his merit ſhould make an impreſſion on my heart, did all in his power to depreciate him in my opinion. He ridiculed every little peculiarity, and ſaid all that wit or malice could ſuggeſt, to make him appear contemptible.——I deſpiſed ſuch a mean, ungenerous conduct, and ever vindicated Mr. Lovemore with warmth, from his low accuſer. That it was, in ſome meaſure, owing to a conſciouſneſs of that gentleman's merit that I defended him, I have no doubt; but to deal honeſtly, I believe my juſtification of him, proceeded more from my hatred and deteſtation of his mean rival.—The Captain imagining, from my treatment of him, that Mr. Lovemore's paſſion was approved by me, in a fit of rage and jealouſy, he ſent him a challenge, which Mr. Lovemore anſwered; and as I think the ſentiments contained therein are worthy imitation, I have copied the whole for your peruſal.

To

To Captain STANLEY.

SIR,

I received your letter, and ſhould imagine, from the purport of it, that it could not be intended for me.——You inſiſt on my reſigning all pretenſions to a lady on whom I have not the ſlighteſt claim, and if I had, I think you could not have a right to demand me to relinquiſh it.——I am perfectly cool, and very little diſpoſed either to turn murderer or be murdered.——You have not done me any injury, and if you had, I know a nobler way of avenging myſelf than by ſhedding your blood; and that is, by forgiving and overlooking it.——You will perhaps call me a coward: in that you will do me an injuſtice, for I have courage to ſupport right, in oppoſition to cuſtom,——which, I fear, is more than you dare do.——The manners of the world I deſpiſe, if *cuſtom* alone gives them credit; and will never conform to any, but ſuch as are ſtrictly conſonant to reaſon, juſtice, and humanity.——I received my life from the hands of my Creator, and have no right over *that*, nor yours:—but whatever opinion you

may

may form of me, from the cool moderation of this letter, I would adviſe you to take care how you preſume again to inſult me, as you cannot be ignorant that there are other means of redreſſing wrongs, than by turning barbarian, murderer, and aſſaſſin.

Yours, &c.

EDW. LOVEMORE.

I know not whether the Captain returned an anſwer to this letter, but it is certain they did not meet.—The way I came to a ſight of it, was owing to Stanley's dropping it, as I imagine, by accident. I ſaw it on the floor after he was gone, and thinking that it belonged to myſelf I put it in my pocket, and it was not till ſome time after that I became acquainted with the contents.—I had no reaſon to doubt the lady alluded to was myſelf, and was not a little offended at the Captain's inſolence, in preſuming to claim any right in me, as I had ſtudiouſly done every thing in my power to diſcourage his addreſſes.——If Mr. Lovemore had been in reality the object of my affections, what right had the

other to endeavour to deprive me of him?—It would have been but a bad recommendation, and would not have been much in favour of his pretenſions, if he had been, as Mr. Lovemore expreſſes it, the murderer of the man that I loved: but I ſuppoſe that Captain Stanley had not at that time theſe conſiderations.

I could not help expreſſing my reſentment at his conduct;—he endeavoured to vindicate it, but finding that I paid little attention to his excuſes, he replied with ſo much warmth, that any one would have imagined, by his manner, I had deluded him into the belief that I loved him, and had been then undeceiving him.——I have reaſon to believe he was offended at the diſapprobation I expreſſed at his conduct, as he made his viſits much leſs frequent than before, and inſenſibly my intimacy with the whole family ſubſided.

I had a very great eſteem for Colonel Iredell; his Lady was a very agreeable woman, and I was ſorry to be on leſs

ſocial

ſocial terms than uſual;——but as I had not offended her, unleſs ſhe conſidered my refuſal of her brother as an offence, I ſoon became indifferent about it.

LET-

LETTER XV.

MRS. Beaumont's nephew, who had been ſome time on his travels, was now returned home, to the joy of his aunt who was doatingly fond of him.——The appearance of Mr. Walton, I believe, made many a female heart flutter, for he was perfectly handſome, and ſeemed to be unconſcious of it. He was indeed, in my opinion, too handſome for a man. ——Not that his perſon was in the leaſt approaching to effeminacy; it was perfectly manly, but I always preferred that ſort of face which is more diſtinguiſhed by the name of pleaſing.——He had neither vanity or affectation; and though very young, poſſeſſed of a large fortune and an elegant figure, he ſeemed to deſpiſe flattery, and never even by a ſmile encouraged it.——I know not whether this ſurpriſing moderation was owing to diſſimulation, or a contempt of that vice; but as it would be uncharitable to ſuppoſe the firſt, I was inclined to give

give him credit for the latter, and by ſo doing, I paid a compliment to his underſtanding, which otherwiſe, I ſhould have pronounced, without heſitation, to have been a very indifferent one.

Mrs. Beaumont frequently hinted to me how happy ſhe ſhould conſider herſelf, if Mr. Walton had it in his power to make himſelf agreeable to me.——She did not ſeem to entertain the leaſt doubt but I muſt be ſo to him—though in that opinion ſhe was miſtaken.

Mr. Walton regarded me with perfect indifference. He was very gallant, very aſſiduous; but did not appear even to have formed a wiſh that it was in his power to pleaſe me.——I was not in the leaſt mortified at his inſenſibility, though I confeſs it was what I had ſeldom met with. If I had been ſilly enough to have been vexed at it, the knowledge of the cauſe that occaſioned it would have reconciled me to my uſual opinion of myſelf, and gratified my vanity.

He

He was in love with a lady who frequently viſited at his aunt's, and had felt a predilection in her favour before he left England.——He had found her on his return perfectly diſengaged, and more amiable in his opinion than ever.——I had frequently ſeen Mrs. Courtney.

She was a widow, and appeared to be at leaſt ten years older than Mr. Walton. ——She had a prodigious flow of ſpirits, and a levity which, I think, is almoſt ridiculous and diſguſting in any one, but a girl of fifteen. She was more a fine woman, than either pretty or handſome. —Her features were not regular, though very pleaſing.—She was an eternal talker, and of courſe was ſometimes entertaining, but often tireſome.——I muſt acknowledge, I never knew a woman, with ſuch ſlight pretenſions to beauty, more engaging; and with ſo little claim either to judgment or wit, ſo pleaſing a companion.——She had faults, but there was ſomething in her manner which made one forgive and overlook them.

Mr.

Mr. Walton's partiality in her favour was very great, and ſhe appeared to be no leſs enamoured of him.—Mrs. Beaumont ſeemed not to approve of this connexion, and wondering at her reaſon for doing ſo, I one day took the liberty of enquiring into it.

She ſaid to me, "I think you know me well enough to be aſſured, that I ſhould never oppoſe my nephew's happineſs merely from the idea of not enlarging his fortune; but he is very young, and, I much fear, unacquainted with his real ſentiments; at leaſt, if he knows them at preſent, and is certified of the truth of his affection, he cannot anſwer for the continuance of it.—Mrs. Courtney is not, I think, a woman likely to inſpire a laſting paſſion; ſhe is too volatile without the only excuſe for it; I mean youth. She is a middle-aged woman, and her manners are almoſt infantine. I cannot conceive the cauſe of my nephew's infatuation:—ſhe has few attractions;—none but what are, in my opinion, counterbalanced by her faults. ——I would not wiſh to retard, much leſs

leſs prevent the happineſs of a young man, for whom I have a real and ſincere regard; I only oppoſe his marriage from the fear that I ſhould give my ſanction to an imprudence which would moſt likely be productive of miſery. But this, I ſuppoſe, is not *his* opinion of my motive for diſapproving his choice, but rather attributes my refuſal to Mrs. Courtney's inferiority of fortune.—I am indeed ſenſible he might aſpire to a more advantageous union; but I ſhould deſpiſe him, if he was of a mercenary diſpoſition.——I am pleaſed at his total diſregard of fortune, and ſincerely wiſh, that the woman, on whom he has fixed his heart, was poſſeſſed of thoſe qualifications, ſo eſſentially neceſſary to conſtitute happineſs, in that ſtate he is ſo eager to enter into;—but ſhe is deficient in what I conſider as requiſite to enſure him a permanent felicity.

"Mr. Courtney her huſband, was of the ſame turn of mind as herſelf; wild, thoughtleſs, and incapable of reflection; —yet even he was diſſatisfied at her too great volatility. The caſe is otherwiſe with

with Mr. Walton:—his diſpoſition is more ſerious than lively, and he has more of a ſolid underſtanding, than of that quick imagination which the widow poſſeſſes. He now complains of my refuſal, which, I acknowledge, very ill agrees with my former unlimited indulgence.—I had much rather he ſhould do that, than that he ſhould ever lament my compliance, which undoubtedly muſt and would be the caſe.—I obſerved his prepoſſeſſion in her favour before he left England.——I confeſs I ſhould have been happy to have dropped my acquaintance with her before his return, but could find no reaſon to aſſign for doing it.—I could not tell her that her viſits were no longer agreeable to me, becauſe I had room to imagine they were too much ſo to my nephew:—No, that was a rudeneſs I could not think of, and therefore choſe rather to leave the iſſue to chance."

"I had intended to have been Mr. Walton's advocate, but I found Mrs. Beaumont's objections unanſwerable.—I was ſatisfied with the juſtice of her refuſal,

fuſal, and therefore acquieſced in ſilence to her opinion. In every inſtance in which Mrs. Beaumont's ſentiments could be diſcovered, I perceived a freſh cauſe to admire and eſteem her.—She was generous in every thing, and conſiſtently juſt to the whole world.

Mr. Walton and Mrs. Courtney behaved to each other as uſual, and ſeemed to ſeek every opportunity of being together.—I did not myſelf believe her to be calculated to confer a laſting felicity —and I have no doubt but Mrs. Beaumont would have had reſolution to reject every ſolicitation that might be made to her, by her nephew, on the ſubject of his marriage with the widow.

She would frequently ſay to me, when we were diſcourſing on that topic, "If I were to yield to my nephew's entreaties, in what I am convinced would be detrimental to his happineſs,—it would be a weakneſs in me very unworthy the name of affection, and becauſe I had not fortitude to perſevere in a denial, which undoubtedly gives me pain, I ſhould act againſt

againſt my reaſon and the regard I had for him, though I am aſſured he would believe my compliance was owing to affection, and he now thinks I have ceaſed to love him; but he is miſtaken, and will, I hope, on a future day, be convinced that his intereſt is my only motive for perſiſting in what gives us both at preſent uneaſineſs."

I believe Mr. Walton imagined that his aunt's affection for him was diminiſhed.—His for Mrs. Courtney evidently encreaſed:—and after having one day preſſed Mrs. Beaumont with an uncommon eagerneſs to conſent to his union with the widow, and as uſual found his entreaties diſregarded, he and the Lady took a journey of a few miles together, and were married without waiting for the approbation of any third perſon. His aunt, on the hearing of the raſh ſtep he had taken, was much afflicted, but it was paſt recall: and when, on their return, he fell at her feet for forgiveneſs, ſhe raiſed him with a ſmile, and told him, ſhe would not, by refuſing what he requeſted, be the firſt to make

him

him repent his marriage; that if poſſible, ſhe would prevent indiſcretion, but never make herſelf the inſtrument to puniſh it.—She alſo received her niece very tenderly.—The new-made huſband was delighted, and probably, on receiving ſo kind a reception, was ſorry he had not before given her an opportunity of proving the forgiving ſweetneſs of her diſpoſition.

Mr. and Mrs. Walton appeared to live in perfect harmony.—She had indeed acquired an abſolute dominion over him. I think it generally follows, that, when a very young man is attached to a woman older than himſelf, her power is more unlimited than where there is a nearer equality of age.—I have ſeen it in ſeveral inſtances, though I cannot aſſign any reaſon why it is ſo.—I do not believe Mr. Walton ever repented of acting contrary to the advice of Mrs. Beaumont——and ſhe was more ſatisfied with the marriage than ſhe at firſt expected to be.

LETTER XVI.

MR. Byron, of whom I am now to ſpeak, was a gentleman that I at firſt got acquainted with at Colonel Iredell's; and I was ſo much pleaſed with his manner and converſation, that his viſits were very frequent at my houſe. He was of a good family, but had not any fortune: he had formerly the expectation of a very large one, and was for that reaſon, not brought up to any profeſſion. On the death of his father, which happened about two years before my knowledge of him, he was left entirely deſtitute, and at this time, was dependant on a Mr. Grenville, a gentleman a very few years older than himſelf.—He had a very ſincere regard for his friend, and was of a generous, benevolent diſpoſition; yet Mr. Byron's ſituation was far from being an enviable one.—He was poſſeſſed of every requiſite to pleaſe; his manner, his perſon, and diſpoſition, were all calculated to engage eſteem and affection.

It

It was objected againſt him, that he had too much pride, and that he reſented every indignity too highly, and ſometimes conſidered as an affront what was never intended as ſuch;—yet he was not naturally either aſſuming or haughty, and his ſpirit was that of a gentleman.

I believed at firſt that he conſidered me, merely as an acquaintance;—but ſoon had the vexation to find that he regarded me in a tenderer light.——I had frequently obſerved him melancholy, and enquired the cauſe, for as he had never, by the moſt diſtant word or look, given me reaſon to imagine he had an affection for me, I could not conceive that to be the occaſion of his ſadneſs.

After having rallied him on it one day, I obſerved he could hardly bear it, and that it affected him extremely; I therefore more earneſtly intreated him to inform me of the cauſe of his diſquietude.——He replied, that he had not power to refuſe any thing to my entreaties, but hoped I would forgive the declaration he was going to make, when I ſhould

ſhould reflect it was my own command that had forced him to do it.

I was prepared for what he was going to ſay, and would gladly have avoided hearing it; but I knew not how to retract, and therefore aſſured him of my attention.

"You ſee before you," ſaid Mr. Byron, "a man deſtitute of fortune, a poor dependant on the friendſhip of another, who, for any offence or caprice in his own will, may conſign him to beggary. He once having hopes of a happier fate, has made the preſent more inſupportable: yet even this is happineſs, compared to an hopeleſs paſſion.—Yes, Madam, fortune could not of itſelf have ſufficiently humbled or depreſſed me—— but to the reſt of my miſeries, Love muſt be added.——I do not ſolicit, much leſs expect a return.—I do not wiſh to engage your heart in my favour, I only reveal to you the ſentiments of my own. —Do not conſider this as preſumption; misfortunes have not deprived me of ſenſibility,

ſibility, nor the power of admiring beauty and merit.——Had I been a monarch, I ſhould have addreſſed you with the ſame diffidence and awe:—it is the conſciouſneſs of my own demerits, not my poverty, which has hitherto kept me ſilent.—But this believe, that woman never had a more faithful or unhappy lover."

I aſſured him, that the knowledge of his worth made me conſider the partiality he expreſſed for me in a very flattering light. "To be diſingenuous to you, Mr. Byron," added I, "would in my opinion, be both unjuſt and ungenerous. You have merit ſufficient to make any woman proud of a prepoſſeſſion in your favour; and had not my heart been engaged to another, it would not have been inſenſible to your paſſion: as that is the caſe, accept of my friendſhip, and aſſure yourſelf that I ſhall ever eſteem you."

He appeared pleaſed with what I had ſaid, and perfectly ſatisfied.

Perhaps,

Perhaps, my dear Mr. Lewis, you will think I acknowledged too much;—but Mr. Byron was an amiable and deſerving man; he was beſides unfortunate, and might have thought his ill ſucceſs in love proceeded in ſome meaſure from that cauſe.

I ſpoke to Mr. Walton, and deſired him to uſe his intereſt to procure ſome eſtabliſhment for Mr. Byron: he promiſed me he would, and in a ſhort time told me, that the gentleman might take his choice either of a commiſſion in a regiment which was going abroad, or a place in a public office. He choſe the former, and, before his departure, called to take leave of me. He was in the utmoſt agitation, and a thouſand times entreated me to forgive his emotions; adding, if he had not come to take leave of me, perhaps, for ever, he would not, a ſecond time, have mentioned his paſſion.——He appeared in the utmoſt deſpair, and I was grieved at the ſight of his tenderneſs for me. I ſincerely hope that a ſhort time baniſhed me from his

remembrance.——I never saw him afterwards, as, before his return to England, I had bid an eternal adieu to London, and every one was ignorant of my residence but Mrs. Shelburn.

LET-

LETTER XVII.

I Received a letter from the lady with whoſe name my laſt epiſtle concludes, informing me of the death of Mrs. Manley, who had ſome time been ill, though no one believed her to be dangerouſly ſo.—I cannot give you an account of what my ſeelings were on reading it; but the next poſt brought me one which, I bluſh to own, gave me too much pleaſure.

"At laſt I have the liberty of writing "to you, have the liberty of telling "you, how much, how very much I "love you, and what I have ſuffered by "the cruel, but neceſſary reſerve you "have ſo long inflicted on me. But is "your heart ſtill mine? Does it receive "pleaſure from the conviction of my "tenderneſs, and that I may, without a "crime, avow every ſentiment of my "ſoul?——You conſidered it as your "duty to forget me. Tell me, did you

"*ſucceed* in the endeavour? And has one "more fortunate than myſelf obtained "that affection which I was cruelly forc-"ed for a time to relinquiſh?——But "that ſuſpicion is injurious to your "truth; I need but conſider your acti-"ons to be aſſured it is;—for the heart "that could ſacrifice its own happineſs "to a principle of juſtice, can never be "faithleſs, or inconſtant.

"The death of her who had ſo long "withheld me from you, at laſt reſtores "me to you; and as ſoon as I can, with "decency, leave this place, I ſhall be "with my Amelia—with my ſoul's chief "joy and pleaſure.——Write to me, my "angel; tell me that I am ſtill dear to "you, and that every obſtacle which op-"poſed our felicity is removed. With-"out your affection, I ſhall be more mi-"ſerable than ever:—it was my ſupport, "my conſolation in all my misfortunes. "—I often reflected on your tenderneſs, "and wondered why I was unhappy.—— "My heart is agitated with a thouſand "various emotions, for which I cannot "aſſign the reaſon.——Write to me

"then,

"then, my deareſt, and moſt eſteemed
"of women, and diſpel that anxiety
"which, though I am ſo near happineſs,
"I cannot entirely overcome."

I wrote to him immediately, and endeavoured, as much as poſſible, to conquer my too great exceſs of affection, and yet not give him reaſon to accuſe me of coldneſs.——The contents of my letter were as follow.

"It would be an unpardonable diſſi-
"mulation, to pretend that your letter
"did not give me pleaſure. After hav-
"ing been ſo long deprived of you, to
"have you at laſt reſtored to me, is a
"happineſs that I want words to expreſs.
"——Reſt aſſured, that my heart reſiſt-
"ed every endeavour to efface you from
"it, and is ſtill yours with the ſame fer-
"vency of affection, as at the moment
"you was moſt convinced of it.—After
"my having ſaid ſo much, you cannot
"doubt my love, and therefore, will not
"accuſe me of coldneſs or indifference
"from the requeſt I am going to make
"you.—We are ſatisfied of each other's
"fide-

" fidelity, and the pleaſures of a free and
" unlimited correſpondence ought to con-
" tent us.—I have a reaſon which makes
" me wiſh that we may not at preſent
" meet:——ſtay till your tenderneſs is
" more tranquilized, and your emotions
" leſs lively.—Immediately to come to
" me, would be an inſult to Mrs. Man-
" ley's memory.—Give me a proof of
" your moderation, and I ſhall be more
" ſatisfied of the durability of your af-
" fection. Do not, from this requeſt,
" give way to the ſuppoſition that you
" are no longer dear to me, but believe
" that you reign unrivalled in the heart
" of

" Your

" AMELIA."

You will, I dare ſay, my much eſteem-
ed friend, be aſtoniſhed, why I endea-
voured to prevent Mr. Manley's coming
to me.——I will honeſtly tell you the
truth.——I was fearful we ſhould again
be on terms which were but too inti-
mate.——I doubted my own reſolution
when he was preſent; and as my heart
could be ſatisfied with writing to him,

and

and receiving proofs of his tenderneſs in the ſame way, I ſtrove to make his ſatisfactions conformable to my own, but in that attempt I was unſucceſsful.—A letter which I received from him, will ſerve to ſhew how cruel he thought a requeſt of the kind was, and which I had conſidered as juſt and reaſonable.—The letter is as follows.

" Is it poſſible, after all I have endured
" for your ſake, that you ſhould ſtill wiſh
" to prolong my ſufferings?—Ah, Ame-
" lia, how little are you acquainted with
" the ardent violence of my paſſion, to
" imagine that I could be contented with
" writing to you, and be ſatisfied with-
" out ſeeing you!——Surely you could
" not be ſerious when you required it,
" and only made the propoſal to try my
" affection.——I will believe it impoſſi-
" ble that you could wiſh my compliance.
" ——What have I gained by my rigid
" obſervance of every thing you deſired,
" if you are eternally to be raiſing freſh
" obſtacles to a happineſs which I think
" I have at leaſt deſerved to obtain?—
" I bore every miſery with ſome degree

" of

" of fortitude, I believed you to be an
" equal ſufferer with myſelf, and never
" once imagined that you would inflict
" on me diſappointment and wretched-
" neſs. If any part of my former let-
" ter has offended you, inform me of it,
" and I will make every atonement in my
" power—but in pity do not enjoin ſo
" hard a compliance as that of not ſee-
" ing you till forms of ceremony are
" paſt. Ah! you know but very little
" of the impetuoſity and violence of my
" feelings, if you for one moment be-
" lieve that I would deſiſt from endea-
" vouring to ſee you!—Write to me, I
" beſeech you, and tell me you was not
" ſerious in what you demanded;—and
" that you will indulge me with the plea-
" ſure of once more ſeeing and converſ-
" ing with you ſpeedily."

I had not reſolution to perſiſt in what I had exacted;—I therefore immediately wrote the following lines to him.

" Let my unwillingneſs to give you
" pain, be manifeſted by the readineſs
with

" with which I give up my own opinion
" to yours, and act contrary to my own
" judgment, leſt, by perſevering in it, I
" ſhould make you wretched.——Not,
" Manley, that I will allow, for my ſake,
" you have ſuffered any thing——your
" own heart, I am perſuaded, would
" not have permitted you to have acted
" differently:——and however you may
" boaſt of the ſtrength of your affection
" for me, honour and juſtice are ſtill
" ſtronger.——If they are not, I am
" miſtaken in my opinion of you, and
" for the firſt time ſhall repent my par-
" tiality.——Heaven is my witneſs how
" ardently I wiſhed to ſooth your every
" diſquietude, and what would I not
" have ſacrificed for your happineſs!
" You cannot therefore now believe,
" that I ſhall endeavour to revive your
" miſery.

" You aſk what you have gained by
" your former acquieſcence to my will?
" ——Is it poſſible you are ignorant?—
" If you are, I will inform you.—A
" ſelf-approving heart, and the ever-
" laſting affection, joined to the per-

" fect confidence and eſteem of a woman
" who loves you far better than her-
" ſelf.——Theſe, my dear Manley, theſe
" are the advantages you have gained,
" and I am perſuaded you will not con-
" ſider them as trivial.

" Why do you aſk if any part of your
" letter had offended me? I aſſure you,
" not any——on the contrary, the
" whole gave me real pleaſure.——Be-
" lieve me, I ſhall be rejoiced to ſee
" you; but do not come till decency
" will allow of your abſence from your
" uncle's houſe: ſacrifice ſomething to
" decorum, for that, at leaſt, is due to

" Your

" AMELIA."

I will not trouble you, good Sir, with any more of our correſpondence, and ſhall only ſay, I received ſeveral letters from my lover, as he wrote to me every day, all equally paſſionate and tender.

I was reading one I had juſt received from him——my thoughts all employed on that dear ſubject, when the door opened,

opened, and to my ſurpriſe and joy, Mr. Manley entered the room. I flew to welcome him—— he caught me in his arms——he preſſed me to his boſom—— and we, forgetting every thing but each other—the whole creation, beſides, was to us as nothing. So great indeed was our joy, that for a time it deprived us of all power of utterance.——Oh! my dear Sir, what pleaſure did I not receive from his ſociety! He preſſed me to marry him —that was not in my power—but I ſighed at the neceſſity of a refuſal. He was conſtantly with me, and our happineſs was uninterrupted, till he received an expreſs that his uncle was dangerouſly ill, and earneſtly wiſhed to ſee him. This was a cruel diſturbance to our felicity, but there was no avoiding it; for he was obliged to leave me.——He ſtrenuouſly urged me to accompany him; but the appearance of virtue, which I always ſtrove to preſerve, that I might retain the friendſhip of thoſe who poſſeſſed the reality, gave me reſolution to reſiſt his entreaties.——We parted, and felt the pangs of ſeparation in their utmoſt force.

" Parting,

" Parting, to death we may compare;
" For ſure to thoſe that love ſincere,
" So dreadful is the pain:
" Such doubts, ſuch horrors rend the mind;
" But, oh, when adverſe fate grows kind,
" How ſweet to meet again!

" To thoſe tried hearts, and thoſe alone,
" That have the pangs of abſence known,
" This bliſsful change is given;
" For who, ah! who would not endure
" The pangs of death, if they were ſure
" To meet the joys of Heaven?"

I heard from Mr. Manley every poſt, and had the ſatisfaction of finding that Sir Robert Dixon was not ſo ill as was at firſt apprehended, but was judged out of danger, though ſtill very weak and languid. I deſired Mr. Manley not to think of returning to me till his uncle was perfectly recovered.

My time indeed paſt heavily without him, but I had learnt to ſuffer from paſt experience. I had ſeveral admirers, but I treated all with the ſame cool civility and indifference;—Manley was the object of my affection; and,

" What wonder *he* ſhould charm with eaſe,
" Whom happy nature form'd to pleaſe,
" And love had made ſincere?"

He

He was, in every reſpect, worthy my tenderneſs; and it would have been a reflection on the goodneſs of my own heart, if merit like his had not been dear to me. I received no pleaſure but what his letters gave me, nor indulged a wiſh but for his return.——I had once done him an injuſtice, and attributed his conduct to motives very different from the real ones: the conviction of my error now made him doubly dear to me. Joined to an extreme tenderneſs for him, I had ſuch a perfect eſteem for his virtues, and ſuch an unlimited confidence in his honour and integrity, that they ſerved to render my love perfectly ſatisfactory to myſelf. I did not indeed believe that his conſtancy was infallible. Not that I had any juſt reaſon to fear he ever would be unfaithful; but I was convinced, that even if time ſhould deſtroy the violence of his paſſion, and ſome new face ſhould inſpire ſentiments ſuch as he at preſent felt for me, that I ſhould have no reaſon to apprehend he would join falſhood and inſincerity to a decreaſe of paſſion, and that I ſhould never have juſt reaſon to ceaſe to eſteem him. A change of ſentiments

timents is, at leaſt excuſable: no man can anſwer for the durability of his preſent opinion; and as we do not chuſe our ſenſations, but they are forced upon us, and we are compelled to feel them, I do not conſider changeableneſs in the light moſt women do: it is the crime of intentional deceit which too often attends it, that makes it criminal and deteſtable. Were the choice of inclination in our own power, there would not be ſuch a thing exiſt as a hopeleſs affection, nor indeed any other ſpecies of miſery that originates from the heart. Whatever my own ſex may think on this ſubject, I am ſure yours, Sir, will readily ſubſcribe to the doctrine I have here laid down.

Sir Robert Dixon was perfectly recovered, and I had the pleaſure of once more beholding my dear Manley. Why are pleaſures that come to us unmixed with pain, of ſuch ſhort continuance! My happineſs was too perfect to laſt. I had in Mr. Manley the moſt faithful and affectionate of friends, and the tendereſt and moſt ſincere of lovers. The ungovernable ardour of his paſſion for me, deprived

deprived me of the moſt valuable of his ſex, and left nothing in this world, that could either intereſt or amuſe my heart.

After his uncle was recovered, he left the country, and his eagerneſs to ſee me made him travel all night, becauſe he would be with me one day the ſooner; in conſequence of which he caught a ſevere cold. Not apprehending any danger from it, he was inattentive and regardleſs of his complaint, till at laſt it terminated in a fever, which, in ſpite of every aid and aſſiſtance, proved fatal to him.

"My deareſt Amelia," ſaid he to me, a little before his diſſolution, "I regret nothing but the loſs of you. After ſo many cruel ſeparations, at laſt to have obtained you, and now to be forced to relinquiſh you for ever, is, alas! too much!"

My eyes were bathed in tears—he entreated me to be compoſed.

"Perhaps," ſaid he, "our knowledge of each other will be permitted to exiſt

exiſt *hereafter*—then think how bleſt we ſhall be when nothing can ſeparate or divide us!"

A faint ſmile overſpread his face:—— at that moment the laſt ſtruggles of expiring nature came upon him; he breathed on my boſom his laſt ſigh, and expired in my arms.

Oh! my dear Sir, I cannot deſcribe my affliction to you. Thoſe who have not loſt by death the deareſt object of their affections, can never form an adequate idea of it. The falſhood of the man we love, furniſhes us with weapons to overcome our grief:——but conſtant and ſincere to me in every action of his life, nay even his death to be owing to the too great and fatal impatience of his paſſion;——the thought was too much, infinitely too much, for human nature to ſuſtain, nor could I ſupport it. I was taken exceedingly ill, and my life was judged in danger; but a naturally good conſtitution overcame the effects of violent grief,—and, contrary to the expectation of my phyſician, and my own wiſhes, I recovered.

Manley

Manley was never abſent from my thoughts; I heard, in imagination, his laſt words, and felt his feeble preſſure. I did not wiſh to overcome the melancholy which the reflection of his tenderneſs inſpired;—he had died for me, and ought I even to have endeavoured to forget him? Thus I reaſoned at that time.——I never left the houſe, and was denied to every body. All wondered at the cauſe of my ſudden ſadneſs, but there was not a human being in the world that was acquainted with the reaſon. At laſt, tired with the importunate aſſiduities of thoſe, who (though I never ſaw them, on pretence of indiſpoſition) were eternally calling or ſending, I bade an eternal adieu to London, and retired to this place, which I never mean to leave.—The country did not ſooth my diſquietudes, I was peſtered with declarations of love; and ſince Manley's death, the very mention of that word has been odious to me.

You are acquainted with the young, the impetuous Sir William Mordaunt. He haunted me every where, he purſued my foot-ſteps, bribed my maid to deliver his

his letters, and tormented me inceſſantly. But his paſſion for every thing is, I believe, more violent than laſting: for having for ſome time perſiſted in teazing me with his addreſſes, the elegant and accompliſhed Miſs Dudley detached him from me, and freed me from his diſagreeable importunities.

LET-

LETTER XVIII.

THE ſociety I enjoyed in this neighbourhood was at firſt bearable, and at laſt became pleaſing to me, and inſenſibly weaned my heart from the conſtant object of my thoughts. I became Sir acquainted with you, and as you either did not feel, or forbore to mention a partiality for me, I flattered myſelf with the hope, that I had at laſt, obtained a male companion, who did not think gallantry and profeſſions of love neceſſary to make himſelf agreeable; but I had the mortification to experience a diſappointment. The eſteem I entertained for you, has made me candidly relate every circumſtance of my life; that if your paſſion is affected, you may ſee how very diſagreeable the mention of love is to me; and if it is ſincere, there are ſome incidents, in this recital, which cannot fail to have power to overcome it. If you can ſtill retain any eſteem or friendſhip for me, after what I have related to you,

you, I ſhall ever be happy in your ſociety; but in any other light you cannot have any thing to expect or hope from me. I am convinced you are too reaſonable to perſevere in what you know is diſtreſſing to me, and I ſhould alſo hope too delicate to wiſh to be a fourth lover.

My life, in ſome inſtances, is marked with tranſgreſſions that cannot be juſtified; and though I had youth, health, fortune, and as ſome ſaid beauty, and was, in every reſpect, an uncontrouled miſtreſs of my own conduct, yet it has been far from a happy one. Diſappointment and regret have been my conſtant attendants, and I have neither been a prey to ſuſpence, or tortured by certainty. This may ſerve to convince us, how ineffectual every bleſſing is, if miſapplied, and that our wiſhes, when indulged beyond the reſtrictions of virtue, only ſerve to make us miſerable.

I adopted at the firſt a ridiculous notion, which I fooliſhly perſevered in, and to that miſtaken opinion was owing every anxiety of my paſt life. I believed that there

there did not exiſt the poſſibility of happineſs in marriage, becauſe I had failed in it:—when one moment's reflection muſt have convinced me of its fallacy, and that an union which has not virtue for its baſis, cannot be productive of any thing but miſery. And tho' I obſtinately refuſed every offer of the honourable kind that was made me, I am now convinced, that there is not any ſtate in life ſo calculated to confer happineſs.

Libertines and fools may deſpiſe it; but I cannot conceive a felicity equal to two hearts fondly and tenderly attached to each other, and united for life in the bands of virtuous love. In thoſe bands, a woman enſures to herſelf a friend and protector, and a man a ſoftener and ſoother of every anxiety. I do not mean a mercenary union, or where the affections of a woman are pre-engaged; as I think there is no excuſe for her to yield her hand when ſhe is conſcious of a prepoſſeſſion in favour of another. No force in ſuch a caſe could compel, or intereſt induce her to it, even if the man adored her to diſtraction; as he muſt

muſt be more completely miſerable, in being bound to her for life, if ſhe was regardleſs of his tenderneſs, than an eternal ſeparation could poſſibly make him: nay, indeed, the ſtronger his affection, the greater his miſery. With a woman the caſe is ſimilar.

You ſee, my amiable friend, I am an advocate for marriage, notwithſtanding my continual rejection of it: but, as I before obſerved, it was owing to my own folly and thoughtleſſneſs. I have found every enjoyment embittered either by remorſe, or the fear of its continuance, but I have now done with the world.—I wiſh if poſſible to enjoy tranquillity, but have no deſire or hope beyond it. During the remainder of my life I ſhall deſiſt from doing evil, and endeavour, if poſſible, to atone for the offences of the paſt. In the recital which I have given you, I have inſenſibly been led back to experience again the ſame anxieties and the ſame diſappointments, but I am again compoſed, and regardleſs of the world, with all its enchantments.

" Father of light and life! thou good ſupreme!
" O teach me what is good! teach me Thyſelf!
" Save me from folly, vanity, and vice,
" From ev'ry low purſuit; and feed my ſoul
" With knowledge, conſcious peace, and virtue pure,
" Sacred, ſubſtantial, never-fading bliſs!

THOMSON.

From the deceitful allurements of vice, I believe and truſt I am perfectly ſecure. Paſt errors cannot be recalled: but if a conviction of them is attended with a ſincere repentance, and not again purſued, I humbly hope it will be conſidered as an expiation.

You ſee, my dear Sir, the woman on whom you had placed your affection, and whom you ſo frequently importuned to honour you, as you were pleaſed to call it, with her hand; you ſee her, I ſay, in her true, her blameable character: but do not let the conviction of your miſtaken opinion of her, teach you too much caution. Unworthy of approbation as my conduct has been, and how little deſerving I am of your affectionate regard, you will be juſt to the ſex—— you will not be ſo ungenerous to form your

your opinion of the *whole* by a *part*. Though *one* has proved herſelf *guilty*, there are *thouſands* who are *innocent*, and calculated to make you happy: and that from among them you may enjoy felicity with one more deſerving of you than is the criminal, but repentant writer of theſe epiſtles, is the ſincere wiſh of her who will ever remain

Your affectionate Friend,

AMELIA LEDWICH.

FINIS.